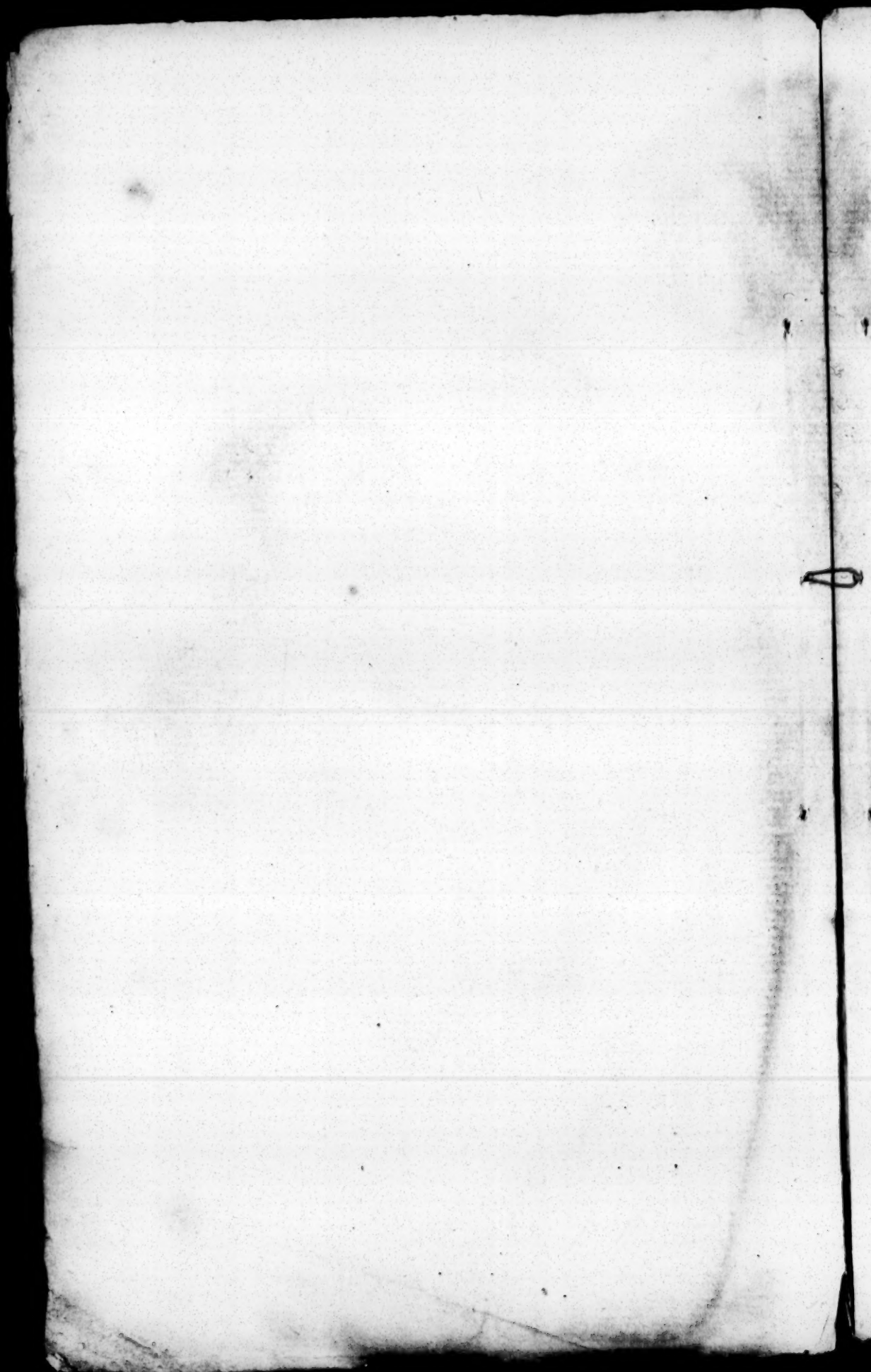


A
R E P L Y
To what the Rev. Dr. COKE is pleased to call
THE
S T A T E
OF
DEWSBURY-HOUSE:
B E I N G
A V I N D I C A T I O N
O F T H E
CONDUCT of the TRUSTEES
of that House.

674 742

PRINTED IN THE YEAR M.DCC.LXXXVIII.



A
R E P L Y
TO THE
Rev. Dr. C O K E, &c.

IT must be a source of deep concern to every feeling mind, surveying the lot of mortality, doomed to struggle with innumerable difficulties, and exposed to perpetual toil and labour in this its sublunary habitation; that mankind, as citizens of the world, under one common parent, should not, by unanimity and concord, endeavour to avert that train of misfortunes, which is the inevitable consequence of strife and discord. Yet, so numerous are the accidents to which we are hourly exposed, and so various the opinions of men, that there is no one, who has arrived at years of maturity, but must have seen almost daily proofs of this lamentable variance betwixt man and man, except a hermit, who, by a voluntary seclusion from society, is alike unacquainted with its joys or its sorrows.—It would, however, be an alleviation of this calamity, if the votaries of religion themselves, were so far swayed by the precepts of that gospel they profess to believe, that peace and concord might inalienably remain in their borders: but that they are actuated by passions equally violent with the common multitude, just as

prone to discord, and in some measure as careful after the things of this world, I think the example before us a memorable testimony.

The unhappy dispute which has for some time past prevailed betwixt the Trustees of the Methodist Preaching-House at Dewsbury, and the Conference, is at length, after a variety of vicissitudes, brought to a conclusion. And as the Rev. Dr. Coke has thought proper to present the public with a vindication of the conduct of Conference; the Trustees think themselves in like manner called upon, to request the public attention to a justification of the measures they have uniformly pursued from the very origin of the contest to its unhappy conclusion. An appeal, nevertheless, to the public ear is what they would never have undertaken, unless impell'd by almost unavoidable necessity (as they have likewise been to every action during the whole revolution; never attacking, but always resisting the attacks of their adversaries) to acquit themselves from the charge of "barefaced tyranny, and injustice;" to prove that in reality there is no shadow of a parallel betwixt their conduct and "the Popish Inquisition;" to vindicate and applaud before the world that upright and generous disposition of their Minister, Mr. Atlay, which the Rev. Dr. has audaciously attempted to defame, and whom he has very charitably classed with the "Devil" himself: In short, to wipe off their characters that stain which has been cast upon them, not alone as *christians*, but as *honest men*.*—As in these polemical publications, justice and equity will doubtless be appeal'd to on both sides: nay, more; as Conference has already appealed for the rectitude of their measures to that most awful tribunal which guilt must shudder but to think upon; and as on one part an error there must be, facts alone must determine where that error lies. And the Trustees would ob-

serve,

* See the Rev. Dr.'s pamphlet.

serve, that in stating their facts, they will endeavour to be a little more careful than the Reverend Doctor, and "that eminently pious man, Mr. Valton;" that their facts shall have a legitimate title to the name, resting upon the adamantine basis of truth, which the generality of their adversaries, they are bold to affirm, do not; in very deed that they are no facts at all.

"The grand point in this contest" which the Rev. Dr. has examined "in the spirit of candour, and in the fear of the Lord," he says, consists in this: "Whether the Trustees ought to have power "by themselves, and of their own authority alone, "to reject any preacher sent them by Conference, "or not." And if the Trustees did demand this mighty privilege; wherein consists "the barefaced tyranny and injustice" of it. An ordinary capacity, I think, will never be able to discover it.

A society of people, wishing for a comfortable and convenient house for divine worship, have contributed a share of that money they have earned by the sweat of their brows, for building a house for that purpose: when this house is erected, to whom does it belong; to those people or to the Methodist Conference? This is a question of so very peculiar a nature, that the public may perhaps gaze with astonishment to hear it proposed; let that astonishment, however, be reserved for a future occasion, while, in the mean time, the Trustees assure them, that how preposterous soever it may appear, it comes nearer the grand point in contest, by many degrees, than that which the Rev. Dr. has, with so much confidence, promulgated. To be serious; the subscribers, or their Trustees, most certainly ought, in justice, to remain in full possession of that privilege, and not be dependent upon the sole pleasure of Conference, for the removal of any minister who may incur their just displeasure. A privilege, however tyrannical it

may appear when vested in the Trustees, the Conference are barefaced enough to arrogate wholly and solely to themselves, thereby depriving the Trustees of any, the least authority upon their own territories, and in *deed*, though not in *word*, claiming the property themselves: which they must confess to have been their original design even at the expence of a *suit in Chancery*. But the Trustees cannot recollect they ever did demand this mighty privilege; they would have been content with scarce so much as a privilege of sitting in judgment along with the assistant preachers, mentioned in page 7th of the Rev. Dr.'s pamphlet; but this was charitably denied them. The Conference, the Rev. Dr. informed them in his last letter, "were unanimously resolved to be judged by their Peers," that they would be jury, judges, and executioners; and that of consequence, the Trustees must crouch under the same "barefaced tyranny and injustice" they were most wrongfully accused of assuming.—— This the Trustees affirm to be the real state of the matter; so that as the "grand hinge" on which all the Rev. Dr.'s arguments turn, according to his own confession, is discovered to be not only frail and unstable, but absolutely false. A period might, with great propriety, be here put to the whole business, it being demonstrated that his building is placed not on a sandy, but upon no foundation at all. But as error leads to error, so this is only a slight specimen of the falsehoods with which the Rev. Dr.'s narrative abounds, as, I hope, with little labour, to be able to prove in the course of a few pages, which must be looked upon merely as a defence against accusations, which, if true, morality would blush to own, and religion flee from with horror.

To proceed, then, in this irksome undertaking. The next thing which comes under consideration, is "the eminently pious Mr. Valton's" manuscript, for the truth and sincerity of which, altho' he appeals

peals to the consciences of sundry reputable characters; and further, in the most solemn manner, to the Creator of all Things, I am constrained to say is by no means an immaculate performance:—I shall therefore endeavour, with all due vigilance and recollection, to rectify this matter also, and with that candour which I trust *piety* will never think reprehensible.—Mr. Valton says, “It was agreed that Mr. Wesley should be requested to allow two or three trivial alterations in the Conference Deed; that a letter was written by Mr. Heald to Mr. Atlay, requesting him to use his influence with Mr. Wesley to obtain that concession.” Upon the most minute scrutiny of Mr. Heald’s letter, the Trustees do assure that gentleman, the least evidence of any request to one or the other of them is not discoverable, nor the least mention of any trivial alterations in the Conference Deed. This deed, which the Preachers wished the house to be settled upon, was the original cause of contention, and not that extraordinary privilege which the Rev. Dr. so learnedly and elaborately exclaims against. This was the turbulent fountain from whence the stream of discord arose; but this the Trustees rejected from the very beginning, and to this resolution they remained steadfast to the conclusion; they judiciously conjectured, that if their house was settled upon that plan, the Conference would be under no obligation to supply them with any preachers at all (see the form of the deed, in the Conference Minutes, from the year 44 to 1780;) and of consequence, before they would attempt to lay the foundation of the house, desired a few questions to be proposed to Mr. Wesley, viz. “If the Conference should neglect to supply the house with preachers, whether it would be understood, to remain the property of Conference, or the Trustees would have a power to provide for themselves;” and secondly, “If any preacher sent
them

them should be found guilty of immorality, whether the Trustees would have a power of rejecting him :” And these questions “ were humbly hoped to be founded in reason,” as I can scarcely imagine the Rev. Dr. himself will attempt to deny.—This is the substance of Mr. Heald’s letter, referred to by Mr. Valton ; but how far it contains any request for trivial alterations in the Conference Deed, let the publick judge. And these questions received a full and complete answer from Mr. Wesley, in Mr. Atlay’s answer to Mr. Heald, quoted by the Rev. Dr. he not being only willing, but desires them to accept of those privileges.—This is a truth from which there is no appeal. But why the Conference thought proper to swerve from this agreement, the Trustees are at a loss to understand ; that they did swerve from it the Rev. Dr.’s pamphlet is an incontrovertible testimony, and then, and not till then, the contest begun.—Or how Mr. Valton could imagine that Mr. Heald’s letter contained any request is as great a mystery ; that eminently pious gentleman, nevertheless, makes no scruple to appeal to the consciences of the Trustees and his Creator himself, for the truth of his assertion. And the Trustees make no scruple to inform him, that if his conscience be burthened with no greater accumulation of guilt than overwhelms theirs on this account, he never need hesitate approaching that awful tribunal to which he so solemnly appeals, with the most heroic courage and intrepidity.

These alterations, however, which it seems now bear a strong similarity to the Rev. Dr.’s “ grand point in contest,” Dr. Coke now proceeds to examine, and gravely enquires “ whether they include a power vested in the Trustees to reject a preacher on their own judgment and determination, or not ?”—This, he confesses, will be immediately cleared up by Mr. Atlay’s letter to Mr. Heald, which he has
accordingly

accordingly inserted for that purpose. And the Trustees beg leave to ask the Rev. Dr. Does not that letter answer in the affirmative, as evident as the characters of the English alphabet can render it? Does not Mr. Wesley not only grant, but *desire* the Trustees to accept of that power? The Rev. Dr.'s sight cannot be so obscured, his mind cannot be so far engaged in any multiplicity of business, nor his imagination so warm in vindication of his brethren, that he cannot perceive what is obvious to the meanest capacity: What then can the Rev. Dr. mean, if he has any meaning at all, by his truly admirable comment thereupon? where he seems to have forgot the first question in the letter, and recurs to the power of rejection for immorality alone; afterwards exclaiming, most vehemently, against the Trustees for being both accusers, jury, judges, and executioners of the poor criminal, whose state would be truly deplorable if this was in reality the case? But the Rev. Dr. has a task yet remaining, to prove that these extravagant Trustees did require a power of this kind. The Dr. ought to recollect, that this was a voluntary concession of Mr. Wesley, a concession he thought proper to accede to, however contrary to law and equity it may seem to Dr. Coke. He expresses great astonishment that so wise a man as Mr. Wesley should accede to such a proposal. We are informed by Mr. Valton it was very trivial, therefore, perhaps, too trivial for that great man to honour with any notice at all. Whether the Rev. Dr.'s astonishment was excited at this, or whether it was of a different nature, may presently, perhaps, become more apparent.

But further, he says " he has been informed by good authority, that in a subsequent letter of Mr. Wesley's to the Trustees, he there declares who are to be the judges; observing, in an interlineation, that the preacher must be tried before assistant preachers.—This is wonderful indeed!—The Rev. Dr.'s

Dr.'s ideas must certainly be in strange confusion. Does he not perceive, should this be true, either Mr. Wesley must be guilty of a palpable contradiction, or Mr. Atlay of a very atrocious falshood? the former of which I hope self-regard, and the latter his christianity, will prevent him from even suspecting.—If Mr. Wesley really thought the assistant preachers alone to be the proper judges, so wise and intelligent a gentleman certainly could never have granted that power to the Trustees? Mr. Wesley, the Trustees are convinced, is a much more conscientious man than to suffer his thoughts and actions to be so at variance with each other.—They will therefore endeavour to rescue this matter also from that obscurity with which it seems to be enveloped, and attempt to enlighten the Rev. Dr.'s understanding in this embarrassing particular, by assuring him, that Mr. Wesley's sentiments in this case are by no means agreeable to his representation, and requesting him not to bewail the loss of the copy, since they can easily help him to the original, which is, in reality, no letter at all, but proposals offered some time ago to Mr. Wesley by the Trustees for a settlement, wherein is inserted the interlineation he mentions, to which is annexed a reference to a paragraph at the end, where Mr. Wesley expressly asserts, the *Assistants and Leaders* to be the proper judges, and this in his own hand-writing—A testimony for the subversion of which arguments and assertions will be as ineffectual as a cobweb to tame Leviathan; a luminary which all the Rev. Dr.'s eloquence will never be able to obscure.

I would here beg leave to give the Rev. Dr. a little friendly advice, by desiring him, in future, to pay a little more attention to his authorities; for let them come from whatever quarter they may, if his authorities, his assertions, his facts and his reasonings rest upon no better foundation, he may be assured they
will

will be productive in every person acquainted with the real truth, of nothing but generous indignation ; or be condemned to the ignominious doom of absolute contempt.

The Rev. Dr. is guilty of another egregious mistake, which as the Trustees are at length engaged in opening his eyes to the error of his ways, I think ought by no means to be suffered to remain unnoticed. Even granting him that very extraordinary assertion he has so confidently offered to publick view, concerning the privilege claimed by the Trustees, it by no means follows, that the same persons will be accusers, jury, judges, and executioners. It is not an impossible, but far from a probable consequence. Suppose, for instance, any preacher should attempt the chastity of a woman ; the woman, and not the Trustees, becomes the accuser. Suppose another should be intoxicated, his hands be guilty of stealing, his tongue of evil-speaking, lying and slandering, the person injured, or he within whose cognizance any of these may happen to come, will be the accuser, and not the Trustees ; so far from it, the Trustees, from regard to a man whose person they may have honoured, and whose doctrines they may have espoused, would undoubtedly exult in an opportunity of proving the accusation false and groundless ; they certainly could have no pleasure in acting otherwise, and that his conviction would be productive of no credit to them, every one will readily allow. Let the Dr. produce a single instance of the latter in support of his assertion : With instances of the former, I believe the history of Methodism will furnish him with numerous examples.

It cannot but be imagined the publick are already sufficiently satisfied with this specimen of the Rev. Dr.'s " State of Dewsbury-House ;" which if in the same state with the grand hinges on which all his arguments turn, I am apprehensive would be no eligible

eligible situation for c'ther preachers or people; what follows, however, concerning that memorable letter of Mr. Atlay's, signed by Mr. Wesley, the 30th July, 1788, probably may be found to merit a distinction equal to a star of the first magnitude.

The Rev. Dr. says, " Mr. Wesley's letter of the same date, demonstrates, in the clearest manner, that he never *changed his sentiments*, but was still of opinion the preachers ought not to be judged by the Trustees, but by the assistant preachers," &c. The Trustees are humbly of opinion (and think it consentaneous to reason, to which truth, and common sense likewise, each contribute their mite) that if it demonstrates any thing, it demonstrates precisely the contrary.—If that was Mr. Wesley's opinion, it is impossible for them to imagine why he gave his assent to Mr. Atlay's letter? Mr. Wesley certainly never could entertain two opinions, so diametrically opposite to each other, and be convinced of the rectitude of each. This the Rev. Dr. allows to be an objection, and grants, if that letter were considered without the attendant circumstances, it would be insuperable.—If, then, the Rev. Dr.'s arguments, or rather *assertions*, to prove, or more properly *persuade* his readers of this, can be overturned by plain matter of fact, this objection, it is presumed, will remain an objection still. The Rev. Dr. brings a strong accusation against Mr. Atlay of " drawing Mr. Wesley into the signing of that letter, during the hurry of business," &c.—The Trustees are sorry they are so often obliged to awaken the Dr.'s drowsy recollection, but this happens to be so very material a part, that they cannot forbear requesting his pardon whilst they refresh his memory by a few seasonable interrogations. Has he entirely forgot that Mr. Wesley had that letter (which was penned by his own orders) read over to him twice in his own study by Mr. Atlay, early in the morning, in
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the most deliberate manner? That at that time, when the understanding is most unclouded and serene, he gave his free assent to its propriety, in preference to his own, which he wrote on the same occasion? And is the Rev. Dr.'s memory so very deficient as to forget, that himself gave his hearty assent to the same? that many of the Conference Committee did the same, amongst whom were Mr. Pawson, Mr. Thompson, and Mr. Mather? that he took a copy of it in Mr. Atlay's house, and afterwards, with his own hand, inserted it in the Conference Register? that it was kept open till five o'clock in the afternoon, for the inspection of any preacher who chose to examine it? that he and others were assured by Mr. Atlay, that notwithstanding Mr. Wesley had signed it, if it was not agreeable to them *all*, it should never go? Was Mr. Wesley then not alone drawn into it? Were all their intellects so perplexed with business, that no individual in the whole number could discover Mr. Atlay's real intentions, when expressed as plain as language can render them? if so, it is extremely probable they were in no proper capacity for transacting business in Conference, if that business required the simple exertion of any one faculty inherent in the human mind. Truly this is a very miserable apology, and more substantial reasons must be offered to combat this very formidable objection, or it will still remain an insuperable obstacle, a rock which artillery so weak and ineffectual will never be able to level with the ground. These are the principal articles to which it is probable the Rev. Dr. would give the denomination of facts, contained in his admirable pamphlet; and the Trustees presume, from what has been said, that every unprejudiced mind will enjoy a full persuasion of their futility; what remain, as they rest upon the same basis; their consideration would be superfluous, and their disapproval a la-

bour of folly. That the Trustees did not require the authority the Rev. Dr. mentions, is evident from Mr. Atlay's letter, signed by Mr. Wesley, where they would have remained satisfied with a participation of that authority; nay, more, themselves remaining alone the evidence, the power of rejection being vested in the assistant preachers, provided that evidence was unanimous.* Every circumstance in that letter was agreed to by the Trustees, and if the Conference had honourably remained firm to their agreement, peace would long ago have been established, and discord heard of no more. But by some unaccountable levity and irresolution, in a few days their solemn assent was revoked, and the Trustees informed by the Rev. Dr. Coke, that the proposals therein

* That the reader may be satisfied of the truth of this, I shall here insert Mr. Atlay's letter to Mr. Heald, verbatim from the original.

“ London, July 30th, 1788.

“ My dear Brother,

“ I am in great haste, and therefore must write in haste;—last night I had an interview with Mr. Wesley, and most of the preachers who have formerly met with you on the settlement of your house; I really believe they much wish for an agreement, and I think what they now request may easily be complied with. It is only, that in case any preacher sent to you, should be objected to by you, that you shall not silence him, nor put him away, without your first calling three of the nearest assistants to hear your complaint, who, on your *unanimous* evidence against him, shall agree to put him away, and the same week provide you with another out of some of the nearest circuits, till a proper preacher can be got to take the place; and the assistants so called, shall on the first notice given to them, come over to you on the day fixed for that purpose. This request does not affect your property in the house, your collections, or any thing of that kind.”

“ I have no objection to this—JOHN WESLEY.”

“ Mr. Wesley desires you will lose no time in your answer to him, or your affectionate,

“ JOHN ATLAY.”

therein contained must drop; † that new methods of accommodation must again be proposed; that

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† That I may not be accused of wishing the publick to receive this upon my own testimony, I shall here insert the Rev. Dr.'s letter also.

" To the Trustees of the Preaching-House at Dewsbury.

" London, August 6th, 1788.

" My dear Brethren,

" I am desired by the Conference to inform you, that they are
 " unanimously determined to be judged only by their Peers in
 " respect to their appointments and ministerial labours.—Mr. Wesley
 " also desires me to inform you, that he cannot act against the
 " unanimous determination of the Conference, and therefore the
 " proposal made to you in Mr. Atlay's letter must drop. The
 " method we now propose for an accommodation is as follows :
 " 1st, We appoint Messrs. Mather, Pawson, and Thompson, as our
 " delegates, to meet the Trustees once more. 2d, The Trustees
 " are to inform our delegates whether any deed has been executed
 " or not; and if any deed has been executed, the Trustees are to
 " show the deed to our delegates. 3d, If a deed has been exe-
 " cuted and enrolled in Chancery (without which enrollment the
 " deed is null and void by virtue of the Mortmain act) then let
 " a supplemental deed be drawn up on a ten shilling stamp,
 " which supplemental deed must also be enrolled within six
 " months after its execution, and let the following clauses be
 " inserted in the same supplemental deed, viz. 1st, That the
 " Rev. John Wesley, during his life; and after his decease, the
 " Conference of the people called Methodists, and no others,
 " shall have authority to send, year after year, for ever, preachers
 " to Dewsbury, to preach the Word of God in the said preach-
 " ing-house.—2d, Provided, nevertheless, that if the said
 " preachers, or any one of them so sent by the said Conference,
 " be disapproved by the said Trustees, the said Trustees shall
 " summon three of the neighbouring assistant preachers, who are
 " in connection with the said Conference, which assistant preachers
 " shall attend accordingly, and shall hear the complaints of the
 " said Trustees: and if the said assistant preachers shall judge the
 " complaints of the said Trustees to be sufficient, then they, the
 " said assistant preachers, shall remove the said preacher or preachers
 " so complained against, and supply the said preaching-house with
 " a preacher or preachers instead of the preacher or preachers so
 " removed; and the said assistant preachers shall also apply immedi-
 " ately to the said John Wesley, during his life, or to the President
 " of the said Conference after the decease of the said John Wesley,
 " who shall, as soon as possible, supply the said preaching-house
 " with

the Trustees must bind themselves for ever, to receive no preachers from any one except Mr. Wesley and the Conference; that if any preacher should be disapproved of by them, they should summon three of the neighbouring assistants, who, if they judged their complaints sufficient, should remove him. Is not this sufficient to create more than astonishment, in the most lethargic disposition? What kind of people did they suppose the Trustees to be? Did they imagine them to be the slaves of the Conference? To be hurled around like weathercocks by every inconstant gale, and ready to accede to every measure their unaccountable caprice might devise? How were they to be assured they should ever get quit of their burthen, when the power of alleviating or increasing it was entirely at the pleasure of their Lords and Masters, the assistant preachers, who had already afforded them proofs of instability in the very transaction which fastened their yoke upon them? What could the Conference intend by paying no regard to their engagements, first asserting, then contradicting, and again denying? Can they stand forth, and before the world pronounce, that the Trustees ever set them an example of this nature?

“ with a proper preacher or preachers, instead of the preacher or preachers so removed as aforesaid, until the meeting of the said Conference.—N. B. If there be no deed drawn up and enrolled, then the above clause may be inserted in a new deed.

“ 3d, If you consent to the above clause, and execute the proper instrument accordingly, then our delegates shall immediately afterwards appoint Mr. John Shaw and Mr. William Percival, as your preachers for the ensuing year. But if you will not consent to the above clause, we must withdraw ourselves from you, pray for you in secret, and leave you to God.

“ I am your affectionate brother,

“ THOMAS COKE.”

“ P. S. Messrs. Mather, Pawson and Thompson, will meet you, God willing, at Dewsbury, on Thursday in the next week, the 14th of this month, at two in the afternoon.”

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The Trustees were stedfast to their engagements, and uniform in their designs through the whole course of the contest. They were men, and resolved, at all hazards, to maintain their rights and privileges as men. Providence had placed them in a land of liberty, and they were zealous to award the dominion of despotic governors. The Rev. Dr.'s proposals, therefore, met with that treatment, which, if he has the feelings of humanity, he cannot but be conscious they richly deserved—*An unanimous rejection.* Had the Trustees acceded to these proposals they had so often before refused, and that, after others more congruous to reason had been agreed to, would not their conduct have appeared unto the world in a truly ridiculous light? Nay, would not the Conference themselves have laughed at them as the dupes of their romantic designs? After they had at their own expence and labour erected a house, been threatened with a loss of their own property, and that, by means of a contest in law; after Mr. Mather, a Conference minister, in the very pulpit, had, with unparalleled audacity, discharged the people from paying the Trustees the annual tribute for their sittings; after they had had the most atrocious stigmas undeservedly fixed upon their characters, and that in public Conference; after all these aggravated insults, how could the most abject credulity even imagine they would accede to such measures? Such an acquiescence would have been an argument of servile subjection and tame insensibility.—What the Rev. Dr. mentions “concerning his perusal of books on the laws of nations, &c. but never meeting with such an instance of barefaced tyranny,” is strangely misapplied. He is attempting to remedy an imaginary disease in his neighbour, whilst his own constitution is afflicted with the same in reality. This tyranny, which contracts the features of the Trustees into such hideous distortion, abstracting the privilege

lege of "accusers," (and perhaps not even that, as I have before proved) is what the Conference are aiming at, and that in a very imperious tone. The Trustees wished for a Republican Government, a division of authority; nothing less than absolute monarchy would satisfy the Conference. Nevertheless, if the Rev. Dr. will take the trouble to peruse history, either Civil or Ecclesiastical, European or Asiatic, there is no doubt he will find ten thousand instances of tyranny more abominable than either of these, and equal, if not superior to the "Popish Inquisition" itself.

This tyranny and injustice, which is so cumbersome a load on other men's, but so easy an one on his own shoulders, is truly what no man or set of men have a just authority to oblige any one to submit to, and which might be productive of the same consequences he enumerates, in entirely cutting the sinews of Christian discipline, when lodged in the hands of assistant preachers, as well as Trustees. But did ever the Rev. Dr. read books on the laws of nations, which authorized one man to seize the property of another without the least provocation; if he has, he must certainly have found them among the rude barbarians who overturned the Roman empire, or the savage tribes in America. And such a book would be a very valuable and curious ornament to the British Museum.—After what has been said, it is evident the Rev. Dr.'s treatment of Mr. Atlay cannot appear in any amiable point of view; it is treatment which can never be justified upon the precepts of Christianity, never reconciled to the dictates of that justice to which he makes such ardent appeal. It is obvious to the most superficial observation, from the foregoing account, on which side the scale preponderates; that the Trustees were not requiring that enormous privilege; that they were not aspiring to tyranny, and
guilty

guilty of injustice; that they were only faithful to the trust imposed upon them by the subscribers, and anxious to preserve that property which law could never have forced from them, and equity would never have required. Is Mr. Atlay then culpable in engaging himself in their defence, and abetting their designs? If his conduct *alone* has been productive of all the disputes and *evils*, as the Rev. Dr. is pleased to denominate them, does he deserve censure or applause? If censure is due to that man who sacrifices his own ease for the welfare of his neighbour, no man merits a more accumulated load. It is with unspeakable happiness the Trustees assert, that Mr. Atlay's conduct has uniformly been upright and generous, and in continual tenor to the rules of that gospel, which he not only professes to believe, but evinces by the more arduous task of undeviating practice. Such is the conduct which the Rev. Dr. has so minutely examined, and at length, forsooth, discovered to be "drawing forth the cloven foot, and with Satan dividing to the utmost, &c. which he has compared as analogous to committing murder, as contrary to brotherly love, to justice, to every tender tie which should bind man to man, and man to God; as a conduct which ought by no means to be persevered in, but avoided as militating against every thing that is good." But let reason judge, let prejudice itself acknowledge, that it is a shining example of that conduct, which if the Conference had pursued, peace would have flourished, and discord been utterly unknown. So far however was it from being the sole cause of contention, that the Rev. Dr. may be assured the Trustees are so capable of distinguishing betwixt right and wrong, that their conduct would never have deviated from the same beaten path it has hitherto pursued, if the name of Mr. Atlay had never been heard of in the Methodist connection, or Mr. Atlay himself never existed.

existed. But now the Rev. Dr. to crown his admirable chain of reasoning, has "proved to a demonstration, that the Trustees are sensible of the injustice of their own proceedings," and that by roundly asserting, that they have offered Mr. Atlay twice as much as the Conference requested.

If the Trustees *had* made an offer of this kind to Mr. Atlay (which neither they or he ever so much as dreamt of) perhaps their donation might ~~not~~ not have been bestowed upon an unworthy object. But how can this offer prove them to be sensible of the injustice of their own proceedings? How is it possible for that wonderful conclusion to flow from those premises? The Rev. Dr. should recollect, that it is one thing for a man to commit an injury, and quite another for himself to be conscious it is so. There is no necessary connection betwixt the one and the other. But did the Rev. Dr. ever hear Mr. Atlay say, "The Trustees at Dewsbury would bind themselves for ever to receive no preacher but him, and if his conduct should be disapproved of by them, his stay or removal from his situation should be entirely at the option of himself or his friends." Bold as he is, the Rev. Dr. will scarcely assert this, yet this is simply what the Conference require. What then will be the amount of a privilege twice as extensive? Mr. Atlay, like any reasonable being, before he quitted his station under Mr. Wesley, requested of the Trustees to know upon what conditions he came among them; and not without reason, after the dreadful character imposed upon them in open Conference, not being certain, perhaps, whether, like some of his predecessors (if their report was to be credited) he might be constrained to observe *Involuntary Facts*. Verily, it is doubtful but this, like many other of the Rev. Dr.'s facts, when viewed through the optic of truth, will be invisible to vulgar eyes. The Trustees, be
assured,

assured, will render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, but to render unto Cæsar the things which are not Cæsar's, is so grievous a task, that they must beg leave to be excused from the performance of it.

The Trustees having now, it is hoped, completely heaved this terrible burthen, imposed by the Rev. Dr. from off their shoulders; the publick are requested to give patient attention a little longer, whilst copying the Rev. Dr.'s example, they give a further "Vindication of their conduct."—And if, The Trustees are persuaded, if their conduct be compared with that of the Conference by the impartial eye of Equity, the charge of injustice will by no means fall to their share. Let the Conference point out a single deed, a word, a thought they have ever detected, which tended to obscure their characters as Christians. The Conference have not alone in silent thought, but in their words, their actions, proved, and that before the world, their contempt of those precepts of universal benevolence, passive obedience, and non-resistance, which Christianity inculcates. They have been the active persons thro' the whole; the Trustees have merely stood upon self-defence. Nay, when the Conference made their voluntary retreat from the house (where, if they had behaved themselves as Christian ministers, they might have continued for ages in undisturbed repose) as the Rev. Dr. in his letter professed they should do, and pray for their welfare; but instead of obeying that promise, they immediately barred every avenue they could devise which the Trustees might have recourse to for preachers, until Mr. Atlay's arrival, in which office the industry of the illustrious Mr. Mather was particularly conspicuous. For this purpose, persons of unblemished character were again authorised to preach by Conference, who had been ejected, not for immorality,
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not for misconduct, not for irregularity, but, *tell it not in Gath*, for abetting the conduct of the Trustees; others were laid under an absolute prohibition by threats of rejection from their connection, should they preach in the house; some nevertheless were found who despised their Anathemas, rejected their commands with deserved contempt, and boldly stood up in the pulpit, whilst the meek and inoffensive ministers of the Conference, in the publick market-place, gave a specimen of the Rev. Dr.'s promise of withdrawing themselves; not that the Trustees can apparently find by "praying for them," and showing a spirit of benevolence, but by a most virulent and ungentle opposition, attempting to attract the congregation from the house, and spreading reports which in no wise redounded to the reputation of the Trustees. What opinion can be formed of those gentlemen who would not preach in the house themselves, and were incensed at another for performing that office. May it not be reasonably asked, whether this is what the Rev. Dr. calls burning for the salvation of souls, with that enthusiastic ardor which no one who has not experienced can conceive? How could they think of making that place the seat of desolation and emptiness, which had been erected for, and was then ardent in the same design they *professed* themselves to be engaged in? This alone can be attributed to resentment or avarice, two passions which never ought to obtain dominion in the pacific bosom of a christian. Let them not have the effrontery to insinuate, they were fearful, lest when the shepherds were departed, the flock should be scattered; they well know, and cannot with sincerity deny, that a Shepherd there is, one whose character is above reproach, and from whom the shafts of either satire, or open indignation, glide harmless and inoffensive. This assertion, besides, involves a train of absurdities too ridiculous to be
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mentioned. But I would ask the Conference, Are there not other houses, and those of much greater moment than the small one at Dewsbury, still unsettled on Conference plan? What is the large house at Manchester, that at London itself, with sundry others? Why was not their thunder hurled at a much more conspicuous object? Why do they attack the extremities when the head remains infirm? This is a new system in politics, a wonderful innovation in the art of healing.—Why, when the eagle offers herself to view, should they pusillanimously refuse the combat, and retire to attack the inoffensive dove? In short, to make their conduct have some shadow of consistence with itself, Why do they not insist upon every place they preach in being settled upon Conference plan? Then should we behold a numerous and magnificent train of barns, and stables, and courts, and back-yards, and parlours, and kitchens, and work-shops, and out-houses, even Dewsbury Market-Place itself, appropriated to the sole use and benefit of the Methodist Conference. These are all affairs which yet remain to be justified, upon the principles of the Rev. Dr.'s "justice and equity."

Is not this treatment enough to rouse the most peaceful spirit, enough to alarm the most careless, to irritate the most benevolent and mild disposition? It is treatment which, when received from people who profess themselves Ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, words are inadequate to paint, and ideas alone are capacitated to conceive. Yet they are convinced the Trustees were inclined to be quit of them for the reception of Mr. Atlay:—If, after all this, the Trustees had any inclination of this nature (which they solemnly protest they never had) can any one be astonished? Is not the patience with which they suffered this long train of insults much more astonishing:—The Conference are amazed
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the Congregation should entertain the same opinion with their Trustees; it is much more amazing how such a thought could originate in the head of any being endowed with a reasonable soul.—Have the Congregation eyes, and shall they not see? Have they ears, and shall they not hear? Are they possessed of human intellects, and arrived at years of maturity, and shall they not be enabled to make a distinction betwixt right and wrong? Did they suppose them so lost to all sensation, as rather to chuse servitude than freedom, bondage than liberty?—But, they exclaim, They are our children, the fruits of our labours.—If so, it is much to be feared, they are the children of unnatural parents. When a child is arrived at years of discretion, his ideas begin to enlarge, he no longer flies for shelter under the shadow of that benignant wing, which was a refuge from every danger during the morning of life. The parent himself expects him to toil among the multitude, to provide a mansion to repel the tempest, and food to satisfy the calls of nature, and resigns that paternal authority which was necessary to restrain the inordinate sallies of youth. But these parents, in proportion to the revolution of years, would render that authority still more rigorous and severe; they will not allow their offspring the privilege of judgment, nor a liberty to use those faculties, which are the liberal and beneficent gifts of nature.

But the Conference will again object, for there are quibbles without end, “Did we not offer at last to serve the house upon the old plan, and that matters should again run on in the old course?” If they insist upon this, I hope they will not deny it to be a much more formidable proof of their consciousness of the injustice of their own designs, than that offered by the Rev. Dr. against the Trustees. But there are times and seasons for all things, and

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no one, except a silly dupe of fashion, would watch all night and sleep all day. No one would erect a house in the midst of an ocean, or build a ship in the centre of a continent—Yet the Conference are not entirely free from this absurdity. Let them declare at what time this offer was made. Was it not at the time Mr. Atlay had shipped off his goods for Dewsbury, quitted his situation in London, dis-obliged the Conference for doing as he ought to do, and cast himself upon the fidelity of his friends at Dewsbury? Would then the Conference, instead of giving the Trustees an opportunity of repenting themselves of those enormous crimes laid to their charge, have had them perpetrate a more abominable one than all put together, by being guilty of as black a piece of treachery and infidelity as ever disgraced the annals of history? Surely this offer is either an evidence of extreme folly, or a passion inherent in the mind, in comparison to which folly is light; in malignancy, a passion which it may be naturally supposed, they have a thousand times in their pulpits loaded with the most opprobrious language—and that passion is *Revenge*. Folly may be the effect of a natural cause, an effect which education is frequently unable to remedy; but the latter is by no means the offspring of causes which reason and religion are incapable to remove. It is the act, the resolution of a rational being, exulting in the calamity of a fellow plunging a dagger into the bosom probably of a friend, and that perhaps for an imaginary injury. Are they willing to acknowledge their offer the child of folly, it is pardonable; if not, there is indeed cause for humiliation and repentance; let them not with an adder in their bosoms “proclaim, Peace on earth and good will towards men;” let them not assert themselves the Ministers of Heaven, while they cherish a fury productive of a train of passions and affections too black to be mentioned,

tioned, a catalogue too horrible to be beheld; especially when veiled beneath the mantle of hypocrisy, and which human nature can only gaze upon when securely fortified behind the impregnable bulwark of an *unblushing Countenance*.—Mr. Atlay never did, never wished to injure them; he only wished to do what was just and right, to aid the oppressed and injured. That he did otherwise must be proved by arguments more substantial than those of the Rev. Dr. Coke, which are truly no arguments at all, but weak and blunt assertions, supported alone upon the solitary testimony of their author. Is it then possible that the Conference could wish, deliberately wish, for misfortune and calamity upon the head of their old friend and fellow labourer. Then let the Conference never again presume to repeat their offers and concessions, till they can redound to their honour; let them reflect, seriously reflect, that every time they mention them, they are secretly acknowledging the injustice of their own proceedings, and tacitly giving the Trustees that praise for their stability, which openly they will not do. It is with no small pleasure, in recalling to memory the days which are past, that the Trustees can pay that tribute of applause, which they firmly believe to be his due, to their old patron Mr. Wesley; they still respect him, they still honour him, they still revere him; whatever they have had to transact in his presence, and with him alone, has been done in peace, and quickly brought to an amicable conclusion; so that in this case they fear “in the multitude of counsellors there has not been safety.”

Every person who consults the page of history, will find, that whilst states and kingdoms are in their infancy, unanimity and patriotism are chiefly prevalent; they are then combined like children in one family; unanimous in sentiment, warm in affection, and zealous in self-defence. But when
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By degrees the bounds of dominion are enlarged, countries subjected to their controul, and mountains whose summits they never beheld before, the ardor of affection gradually abates. They are no longer a speck in the universe, or a drop in the ocean. The patriot is lost in the polite courtier, and the venerable statesman, intent upon his country's welfare, in the smooth candidate for office, intent upon his own emolument. Ecclesiastical government is an exact parallel. At the time when the first Christians sought refuge from persecution in secret places, and were obliged to commemorate and worship their Divine Master by stealth and intrigue, a sovereign Pontiff of all things, spiritual as well as temporal, was utterly unknown; and at the time Mr. Wesley set out upon his pilgrimage, with as many followers as could be contained in a small parlour, the schemes and machinations of Conference were equally unknown.

Thus having, I hope, thoroughly examined the Rev. Dr.'s pamphlet, and put the various transactions during this contest in the light which truth required, I think it is high time to put a period to this disagreeable undertaking, and disagreeable every one must allow the refutation of a train of falsehoods and contradictions to be. The characters of the Trustees, I presume, will now no longer appear in those gloomy colours with which they have been overshadowed by malevolence. Every unbiassed reader will never hesitate to applaud the rectitude of their intentions; as for those who say, they are resolved to stand by the preachers whether right or wrong (and such there are) as I despair of producing conviction in them, they must be suffered to enjoy their delirium. Where error is chosen in preference to truth, argument is empty sound, and persuasion fuel added to the fire. Truth has been, all along, the object of my chief regard, and what I have delivered is, I believe, drawn from the purest sources, those of
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ocular demonstration, hand-writing, oral testimony, and that from persons most intimately concerned in the affair; in all which, I am apt to imagine, the Rev. Dr. has been miserably deficient, since his assertions and arguments have been universally fallacious, and partly absurd; and since the grand hinge upon which the whole turns has been demonstrated a palpable falshood, an absolute nonentity; the public, therefore, at least as many as have credited his assertions, will be pleased to imbibe more favourable ideas of the Trustees, and cast a small share of that indignation upon their adversaries, or with a more charitable disposition attribute the whole to mistake and misconception. Let the Conference adhere as faithfully to matter of fact, and I am persuaded that all the energy of rhetoric, or the pathos of eloquence, will never be able to defend their cause; that I am absolutely free from error, would be the assertion of arrogance and vanity. To conclude; the Trustees, I doubt not, can heartily join in the Rev. Dr.'s prayer, "That the God of Mercy would blast all the designs of *Ahitophel*, and bring all his councils to nought; yea, that he would bind the first author of this evil, the *Devil*, and say unto him,—*Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther.*"

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